

# RUSSIAN HERITAGE

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## *Russian Heritage* to participate in 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary SPIFFS Folk Fair

March 16 – 20, 2005

This year's theme for the SPIFFS Folk Fair (St. Petersburg International Folk Fair Society) is "Festivals and Holidays Around the World". The Folk Festival is open for school children on Wednesday, March 16 through Friday, March 18 from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m., and it is open to the general public:

Friday	3:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Saturday	10:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Sunday	11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

This year the event is being held at Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg.

Our exhibit will be centered on Russian holidays and festivals. A recent public opinion poll in Russia shows that the following holidays and celebrations are considered to be most important to the Russian people: 1) New Year's Day; 2) Victory Day (end of WWII, May 9); 3) Easter; & 4) International Women's Day (March 8). We have chosen to focus our attention on the Russian New Year's celebration, with attention to the other major holidays on a lesser scale. We plan to have a booth that is attractive and educational. As in the past two years, we will share our space with Vladimir's Collection.

We will need volunteers to help set up the booth late Monday afternoon or evening, or Tuesday during the day. We also need people to volunteer for three-hour shifts Wednesday through Sunday. It is desirable for those volunteering to wear Russian costumes if possible, especially for those who will be participating in the opening ceremonies. Zina Downen, our *Russian Heritage* delegate to SPIFFS will be coordinating the volunteers, and organizing the setting up of the display, so please contact her ASAP to let her know when you and your friends can volunteer. Zina can be reached at 727-399-1713 or by email at [siberia1@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:siberia1@tampabay.rr.com).

# Russian Heritage Balalaika Concert

7:30 PM

Wednesday, March 2, 2005  
Palladium Theater, 231 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. N.  
St. Petersburg, Florida



featuring

## The St. Petersburg Balalaika Trio

A trio of talented musicians will delight the Palladium Theater audience with a program of classical music played on Russian folk instruments, and traditional Russian folk music performed in native costumes.

The first half of the program will include chamber music with a special Russian flavor, with popular pieces by Mozart, Vivaldi, Bach, Strauss, and others. The second half will feature some of the most popular Russian folk melodies and dances, including one section where the trio will perform with Suzanne Pomerantzeff's Russian folk dancers.

The artists include Svetlana Nikonova on the Domra, Vladimir Zakharevich on the bayan, and Andrei Savaliev on the bass balalaika. The trio is now performing with the Washington Balalaika Society, but they come from our namesake city of St. Petersburg, Russia.

General Admission \$15, Seniors \$12, Youth \$5.

# Conferences on the Siege of Leningrad

at

St. Petersburg College, USF St. Petersburg, and Eckerd College

Three very successful conferences were sponsored by *Russian Heritage* in conjunction with St. Petersburg College, University of South Florida St. Petersburg, and Eckerd College. Approximately 500 people attended one or more of these conferences, and students and the general public were moved by the presentations. Key presenters at the conferences were our guests from St. Petersburg, Russia who were invited specially for these events. These "children of the siege" – poet Ilya Fonyakov, writer and artist Ella Fonyakova, and designer Lidia Bobrovskaya – shared their stories and experiences as children in Leningrad during WWII, when the city was blockaded by the Germans for 900 days. Also participating were two survivors who now make their home in the Tampa Bay area, Faina Blagodarova and Irena Nemchonok, who also have written about their childhood experiences during the siege. Finally, there were numerous people in the audience, some who participated, whose parents and/or other family members experienced the difficult days of the siege.

The first conference on the Tarpon Springs campus of St. Petersburg College was held on January 27, the day of the 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the breaking of the siege in 1944. The program was organized by the Honors College Associate Director, Nadia Yevstigneyeva, whose family experienced the siege first-hand, and Dr. David Moore, Professor of History. Several members of the St. Petersburg College faculty and several college classes participated in this well-attended conference. The conference at USF St. Petersburg was co-sponsored by the Honors Program and the Florida Studies Departments of the University on Monday evening, January 31. The longest conference took place at Eckerd College on Monday, February 7, and included presentations of additional films and speakers.

A documentary film was shown at each conference, and readings from diaries, stories, and poems of the "survivors" were featured. The short novel, "That Winter's Bread" by Ella Fonyakova, recently translated into English by Professor Bill Parsons, siege poems by Ilya Fonyakov, and writings by Faina Blagodarova and Irena Nemchonok were moving testimonies to the experiences of these "children of the siege". An outstanding exhibit of pictures, documents, and artifacts prepared by Lidia Bobrovskaya also was presented at each conference.

In addition to the three conferences, our visitors from St. Petersburg, Russia were recognized by the mayor and city council (see proclamation on following page), Ilya and Ella Fonyakov met with local writers and poets, including appearances at two local writers' conferences, and they made a presentation at the Russian-American Club in Gulfport. Ilya is the primary translator of a recently published book in St. Petersburg, Russia of the poems of local poet, Peter Meinke, and these two poets did several poetry readings together.

We want to thank all the many persons who helped to plan and carry out these three conferences. They have been a highlight of this year's *Russian Heritage* program.

# Proclamation

## CITY OF ST. PETERSBURG

- WHEREAS, St. Petersburg, Florida established a twin city agreement with St. Petersburg, Russia in 2003; and
- WHEREAS, The people of St. Petersburg, Russia suffered more than one million deaths from starvation, cold, disease, and enemy fire during the 900-day siege on their city in World War II; and
- WHEREAS, St. Petersburg, Russia celebrates the end of the siege on January 27, 1944 every year as a major city holiday; and
- WHEREAS, This year, as a part of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II, three conferences have been planned to honor the children of the siege at St. Petersburg College, University of South Florida St. Petersburg, and Eckerd College; and
- WHEREAS, In 2003, the Mayor's delegation from St. Petersburg, Florida, was given the honor of marching behind the Russian Governor's delegation in St. Petersburg, Russia's (formerly Leningrad) Victory Parade, and was unique as a foreign delegation by being given the honor to lay a wreath at the memorial to those lost in the Siege of Leningrad; and
- WHEREAS, Three survivors, Ilya Fonyakov, Ella Fonyakova, and Lidia Bobrovskaya, who as children lived through the extremes of the siege, have come from St. Petersburg, Russia to participate in these three conferences;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RICK BAKER, Mayor of the City of St. Petersburg, Florida, proclaim February 7, 2005 as

### Remembering the Leningrad Siege Day

in St. Petersburg, and I urge residents to recognize the suffering and heroic efforts of the Russian people during these dark days of World War II.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF,  
I have hereunto set my  
hand and caused the official  
seal of the City of  
St. Petersburg, County of  
Pinellas and the State of  
Florida to be affixed  
this 7<sup>th</sup> day of February,  
2005.

*Rick Baker*

Rick Baker  
Mayor

# Survivors to share Leningrad memories

By ROBERT SAMUELS  
Times Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG — In Ella Fonyakova's first day of the first grade, she walked to school in subzero temperatures as bombs fell from the sky and burned the factories. In the basement of a bomb shelter, the teacher tried to hold class.

"Everything was destroyed by bombs," Fonyakova said in Russian. "My teacher and many of the kids were killed."

The emotion in Fonyakova's voice transcends language as she tells the story of growing up during the 900-day siege of St. Petersburg, Russia — then called Leningrad. With Eckerd College professor Bill Parsons translating Fonyakova's 61-year-old memories to English, she and four other siege captives will discuss their tales of courage in a conference about the blockade of Leningrad during World War II.

"This conference will just get people to understand an important part of our namesake city's history," Parsons said. "It's so much of an unknown part of the war here."

German troops encircled Leningrad on Sept. 8, 1941. They stayed there until Jan. 27, 1944. Food supplies and electricity were cut off.

About 1-million people of the city's 3-million people died during that period. That's about 12 times more than people who died in the bombing of Hiroshima, Parsons said.

Children like Fonyakova had to endure an unusually cold winter, with temperatures going down to 40 below zero. They covered themselves in blankets and unworn clothes and hardly bathed, Fonyakova said.

Sometimes they got three slices of bread to eat. Other times, they drank a cream soup.

## IF YOU GO

Monday's conference runs from 1:30 to 9:30 p.m. at the Miller Auditorium at Eckerd College, 4200 54th Ave. S. It will consist of documentary films, a panel discussion with the two writers and three other guests and an exhibition of artwork, photographs and memorabilia.

"That hardly filled you up," said Fonyakova, who lived with her parents during the time. "Many people starved to death. . . . It was a miracle that we stayed alive."

The only respite was the written word. One of her favorite stories was Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*. She also started writing herself, even as her hands shivered from the cold.

"I didn't really like to write, but there was nothing better to do," Fonyakova said. "My father would look over what I wrote and started correcting it."

Ilya Fonyakov, another child who grew up during the siege, said writing was a coping mechanism. He remembers looking on the walls of his house and seeing portraits of his family members — and the poet Aleksandr Pushkin.

"I just thought it was a natural family thing," Fonyakov said. "Like mother, father, uncle, poet."

Fonyakov considers himself one of the luckier children. He and his family were allowed to evacuate to Siberia, where he went to school early on during the siege. But he still wrote poems recalling the experience.

At 7, he crafted one of his most famous rhymes:

"The Fascist flew his plane around/  
To bomb the factory on the ground./  
The target he was not to make —/  
His plane crashed right into the lake!"

Both Fonyakov and Fonyakova grew up to become professional writers. Parsons, a Slavic studies professor, became interested in their work about 10 years ago and began translating them into English.

"We've become great friends in the past few years," Fonyakov said. "Almost like family."

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- March 2, 2005 **The Spirit of St. Petersburg Balalaika Trio** performing at the Palladium Theater in downtown St. Petersburg. (see below)
- March 8, 2005 **International Women's Day** (big celebration in Russia)
- March 16 - 20, 2005 **SPIFFS 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Folk Festival at Tropicana Field**  
This year's theme is "Festivals and Holidays Around the World." See page 2.
- April 2005 **Planned showing of Films About WWII on the Eastern Front**
- May 1, 2005 **Russian Orthodox Easter and May Day** (big celebrations in Russia)
- May 7, 2005 **Business Meeting & Program Celebrating the End of WWII in Europe.**  
Time and Place will be announced in an upcoming newsletter.
- May 9, 2005 **Victory Day** (the end of WWII in Europe: major holiday in Russia)

### Russian Heritage Dues for 2005

Many members paid their dues for 2005 in connection with the Old Russian New Year's celebration. If you haven't sent in your dues for 2005, now is the time to do so. Check your newsletter label to see if our records agree: if you have an (05) after your name, that means our records show you have paid for 2005. Or perhaps you can share this form with friends who might want to be associated with *Russian Heritage* in 2005.

"The purpose of *Russian Heritage, Inc.* shall be to preserve and promote Russian heritage, history, and culture, and to educate the general public through such activities as, but not limited to, social events, films festivals, artistic venues, and educational programs." (from Articles of Incorporation of Russian Heritage, Inc., October 1997)

**Membership**  
All who are interested in Russian culture are welcome to join Russian Heritage by simply paying the yearly dues. Members receive a monthly newsletter and discounts at certain events, such as the Old Russian New Year Celebration.  
Please mail this form with your dues to:

Russian Heritage  
P.O. Box 14552  
St. Petersburg, FL 33733

### Russian Heritage Membership Form

Categories for membership for 2005 are:

Student \$0      Individual \$15  
Family \$20      Sponsor \$100 or more

Please make checks payable to: Russian Heritage

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_